

Course outline: Producing

The MA in Producing is a specialisation within the broader **MA in Film and Television**.

The course will focus on five core areas of Producing for Film and Television:

- Intellectual property
- Development
- Financing & business affairs
- Production
- Sales, distribution & audience

During their time at the National Film and Television School, students will produce at least three short films to industry standards.

Year One

The first year contains four assessed modules, and a wealth of other exercises and workshops:

- Module 1 – Fundamentals
- Module 2 – Creative Producing
- Module 3 – First Year Film
- Module 4 – Television Drama

Module 1: Fundamentals

Part 1 – Making a Film

This part of the module includes an exercise which takes the students through the stages of making a film from pre-production to completion. The students will be given a script to film, with various members of the industry as tutor practitioners. Producing students take turns to take different crew roles. The exercise covers production design, cinematography, location management; crew structure and roles; casting; editing, sound recording and sound design, and delivery, with the students gaining both theoretical and practical experience, and an understanding of the producer's role at each stage. The students are then divided into pairs and each pair edits and presents their own version of the filmed material to tutors and the Producing cohort.

Part 2 - Scheduling and Budgeting on Movie Magic

This takes the students through the thinking behind and practical execution of creating a schedule and budget for a feature film. In the scheduling element they will learn how to break down a script, become aware of and understand how to solve the creative and practical problems which have to be dealt with when scheduling a feature film or television programme, and create their own schedule using the Movie Magic programme. The budgeting element then takes them through the different areas of the budget, guiding through the planning and thinking process, and how to approach the crewing, union

agreements, cast, post production, delivery and all other requirements of the budgeting of a feature film. The students will put this into practice by budgeting their previously completed schedule.

Module 2: Creative Producing

The Creative Producing module, which spans both years of the course, gives Producing students the skills to develop their critical thinking. They will learn how to assess creative material and make strong creative judgements. The module teaches the main principles behind development, identifying and discussing promising material, and also gives students the chance to develop their own projects to a professional standard.

Producing students will learn the key skills needed to be creative executives, including script report writing, managing creative relationships, narrative structure, how to give notes to writers, and how to write pitch documents.

Alongside this learning, students will develop a project of their own. At the beginning of the course each student will be required to bring in ideas and material for their own possible film/TV development portfolio; they will learn how to identify good material, and assess how it fits both with their own taste, and with the marketplace. Projects should be based on some form of existing material (this could be a book, play, short story, biography, substantive piece of journalism, or even something they have seen on social media). They will be supported to explore whether the appropriate rights are available. Producing students will then continue to develop this project, if the rights are available or pursue an original idea to work on.

Module 3: First Year Film

This module consists of the development, budgeting, scheduling, production, post-production, editing and delivery of a 7-10 minute fiction film, which is shot and edited during the autumn term. The shooting period is four days in duration. Scripts will be written by Writers and developed in teams by the Producers, Directors and Writers (but working in conjunction with Cinematography, Production Design and Sound). The Composers provide the music and the films are edited and mixed by the end of the year. The module introduces students to the full range of requirements of creative development and team leadership, seeing a film through from inception to delivery (although post-production does not allow for ADR or pick-ups in this module). It teaches students the different methods of editing, introduces them to sound post-production and mixing, and the requirements for completion and delivery of a film.

Module 4: Television Drama (Cross-specialisation module with Writers)

This module aims to give the Producing students understanding and experience of the principles and practice of developing TV series within current TV commissioning parameters. They will work in pairs with Screenwriting students to help create an original proposal for a viable TV series, together with an episode outline, which is then presented to external tutors including TV commissioning executives.

Other Seminars

Alongside and in between the Modules there are a number of exercises, workshops and seminars including:

Springboard Cross Specialisation Introductory Weeklong Workshop

A cross-school and interdisciplinary introduction to film and television, looking at cinematic language and televisual language through the prism of storytelling. It investigates how the main crafts of cinema and television, screenwriting, cinematography, visualisation, editing, sound and music relate to the way filmmaking puts across narrative ideas.

Beyond Time

This is a collaboration with Directing Fiction students and other departments on a short film with intentional limitations on actors, time, budget, location and film stock. The Directing Fiction students will write scripts that work smartly within these limitations, supported by Producing students, with the aim of getting the most from the resources available. This film gives students an opportunity to collaborate with a small team of students from other disciplines to work on a film from inception, through production and post production before embarking on production of First Year Film.

Animated Campaigns

This workshop gives the students a conceptual and practical introduction to techniques in animation, and the different story forms and ways of developing animation ideas. Further seminars and workshops are anticipated throughout the year, typically in collaboration with the Directing Animation students, in order to build Producing students' knowledge of animation techniques and development prior to starting to develop their Animation Graduation Film.

Health & Safety

Training in the principles of Health and Safety, including procedures and process for risk assessments and necessary documentation to give Producing students a knowledge of the basic principles of Health and Safety in the film and television industry, so that they can accurately assess health and safety risks, and can complete both risk assessments and a safety report on their First Year Films and Graduation Films.

Management and Leadership Tuition

A number of tutorials and seminars spread over both years, with the aim of equipping the Producing students to function effectively as team leaders, managers and entrepreneurs.

Year Two

During the second year of the course Producing students focus on putting their learning into practice by producing two films, completing their business learning and preparing to enter the industry.

The second year contains the following two assessed modules:

- Module 5 – Graduation Film (Fiction Graduation Film & Animation Graduation Film);
- Module 6 – The Business of Film and Television

Other workshops and seminars are also included during the year, providing valuable further opportunities to learn.

Module 5 - Graduation Films

Part 1 - Grad Fiction Film

(Cross Specialisation Module with Fiction Direction, Screenwriting, Cinematography, Sound, Design, Editing, Composing, Production Management)

Students develop, budget, cast, shoot, edit, mix and deliver a professional standard fiction film of not less than 15 minutes. The process includes development over 15 weeks, commencing at the beginning of Year 2 followed by 5 weeks' pre-production, 7-8 days shooting, 5 weeks editing and 5 days mixing). This exercise includes full post-production including VFX, ADR, pick-ups (where required), full sound mix to industry standard, and complete delivery (including licensing in of external material, clearances, etc).

Part 2 - Animated Film

Development commences at end of Year 1 and production runs throughout Year 2. (Cross Specialisation Module with Animation Directors, Screenwriting, Cinematography, Production Design, Sound, Editing & Composing)

Students develop, budget, cast, shoot, edit, mix and deliver a professional standard animation film. It trains students in the use of various animation techniques, and commences with script development and animatic proposal for approval before production.

Module 6 - The Business of Film and Television

The Producing students undertake and complete a comprehensive Business of Film and Television module which concludes with the delivery of a Business dossier at the end of the year. The assessment of this takes place at the very end of Year 2 with a viva. This module gives students a grounding in all aspects of the financing, sale, legal process, marketing, international launch and distribution of film and of high-end television drama (HETV), including up-to-date analysis of current market and financing conditions, and the practical and negotiation skills required to make an internationally distributed feature film/TV series. The module is assessed on the basis of students' final Business and Marketing Dossier (based on their Creative Producing project) at the end of the year.

As part of the Business of Film and Television module students will take part in the Pre-Cannes 'Atelier' - with students from La Femis (France) / Ludwigsburg Film Akademie (Germany). This workshop puts the Producing students together with their peer group from the leading French and German film schools and includes seminars on film finance, international sales and co-production, and prepares students for their Cannes Film Festival Immersion.

During the Cannes Film Festival Immersion students will 'shadow' active members of the film industry at the Cannes Film Festival in order that they can experience at first hand the entrepreneurial side of making films, and witness the business of buying and selling, marketing & distribution in a live festival / market context. Followed by de-brief and discussion of learnings as a group.

The Business of Television Drama is a bespoke strand within the Autumn Business Module which introduces students specifically to the TV Drama landscape, including an analysis of schedules and commissioning tastes and output for cornerstone broadcaster / pay TV / VOD companies. This covers the pathway of high-end drama from development through commissioning, multi-party financing, and international licensing and rights distribution.

Contributors include a range of current executives and producers across the broadcast HETV drama industry.

This Module also covers Business and Management Skills, with multiple seminars that introduce students to:

- Setting up and running a production company;
- Tools of business analysis / commercial history and current landscape of the industry;
- Finance plans.
- Company accounts, company set-up,
- UK film qualification
- Parameters for use of the UK's Audio Visual Expenditure Credit (AVEC).
- The Legal Process around film development
- Director, Writer and Actor Contracts

Producing Dissertation

During the year the students also complete their Dissertation module (the outline of which dissertation is delivered in Year 1).

As part of the work necessary to qualify for an MA, each student is required to produce an independent written dissertation or video essay. This runs from the start of the 1st Year to April of the 2nd Year. Following discussions with the Producing Department Dissertation Tutor, and Screen Arts tutors in the first half of the 1st year, students deliver 500-word outline proposal by June of the 1st year; 2000-word detailed proposal and structure by November of 1st Year (students may not progress into 2nd year if they fail to deliver this). Full draft dissertation of 7,000-10,000 words (including sources and bibliography) must be delivered by February of 2nd Year and following discussion with tutors, final version of dissertation by April of the 2nd Year.

An alternative option of a twenty minute video essay is also available to MA students.

The aim should be to undertake original research of an investigative nature, which extends the boundaries of specialist knowledge within particular areas of producing.

The dissertation may encompass any aspect of producing, but should focus primarily on the aesthetic and creative aspects of films and filmmaking, rather than the business or practical sides of production. Students are advised to use the dissertation to help explore and develop their own practice, interests and identities as creative film producers.

More specific areas might include: detailed history of a project with an analysis of crucial production choices and their relation to the creative process examination of the career and experience of a producer, with a critical analysis of the body of films he/she has produced

Other Seminars

Additionally, during the second-year students continue to develop their own projects and take part in a series of seminars, tutorials, and meetings with industry specialists both in film and television.

Including:

Publicity & Marketing

Student producers will be taught how to understand and engage with the tools and requirements of project-specific publicity and marketing; and how to plan the film or TV programme's "identity". This will be put into practice through the creation of a press pack for the Grad Projects.

Meet the Industry

Students will meet a number of industry professionals working in the UK at the moment. They will be available to discuss their areas of expertise, their companies and their careers to give a thorough understanding of where they sit in the current industry landscape, how they got there and how students might fit within the landscape as they move forwards into their careers.